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workers out of job

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Winning votes for cash-poor people

Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) is looking for voters in coming elections – municipal, provincial and federal.

It is not supporting any particular political party. PPAG just wants to ensure that all candidates and as many voters as possible are briefed on Peel's poverty issues, through workshops, one-on-one discussions, and questions raised at all-candidates' meetings.

Aiming chiefly at municipal elections taking place October 27, 2014, PPAG has already set up committees to examine particular issues and produce constructive ideas.

Want to take part? Check the issues inside Tough Times, and phone the contacts listed. Your topic not on the list? Phone 905 826-5041, email toughtimestabloid@primus.ca or leave a note at Knights Table.

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Some of the people who work for the March of Dimes think their dimes are marching away. In fact, some workers could slip under the poverty line if March of Dimes gets its way.

The 70 members of Local 966 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) who work for March of Dimes in Peel are being asked to freeze their wages for three years -- at \$17 an hour for most of them, while five coordinators may be frozen at \$23 a hour. Most of the employees are women.

Some of the workers have been stuck at these rates for eight years. But back in 2005, a dollar was worth more. StatsCan reports that same dollar is worth only 88 cents today.

Mary Jo Falle, president of CUPE 966, says CUPE members will not abandon the people with disabilities for whom they provide personal care.

"Personal care is very special," she says. "People may need help with showers, clean-up after toileting, all sorts of services that need skill and tact and caring."

CUPE says March of Dimes wants to lengthen the probationary period for fulltime and part-time workers, take away some vacation time, and it won't agree to a pension plan. Physiotherapy for work-related injuries (and in a

job that requires helping people to sit up, stand up, such injuries do happen) could be cut to \$500 worth per incident. Vision care could go down to \$150 from \$200 every two years. "The CUPE 966 March of Dimes group is the largest in Ontario. If we give way, smaller groups in other areas of Ontario will have even more difficulty," declares Falle.

People for whom care is provided are housed in apartments owned by the Region of Peel and run by Peel Living. Personal care workers from CUPE are available 24 hours. As Tough Times went to press, CUPE 966 reported it was seeking recognition under the Hospital Labour Disputes Arbitration Act, so that the union would not strike and March of Dimes could not lock them out of the workplace.

Meanwhile in Oakville, March of Dimes was back at the bargaining table, and workers "locked out" since October 28 reached a tentative contract deal, subject to ratification. Original proposals by March of Dimes included wage freezes and reductions in benefits similar to those faced by Peel workers. Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) represents the Oakville workers (all of them women, 25 out of 32 are women of colour).

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Letters to the editor

Tough Times welcomes letters from readers. Writers may use a pen name if they wish. Tough Times needs to know who you are, so include a phone number and address, but your identity will not be revealed without your permission. Letters may be edited. Email your letters to toughtimestabloid@gmail.com or deliver to Knights Table, Brampton.

I survived a stroke - but will I survive the Ontario Disability Support Program?

[As Tough Times went to press, the writer was out of the hospital following open-heart surgery]

Is it the endless cost-cutting on those who need cost-cutting least, is it sheer incompetence or plain evil? Maybe a bit of each. I have been suspended by Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program eight times in 24 months and never for anything that I have done wrong.

I was supposedly overpaid by ODSP and Ontario Works. For what I don't know. But I do know that I have been terrorized for almost two years and it starts showing in my fast deteriorating, already bad health. With the active assistance of the Ministry of Community and Social Services my next stroke is waiting around the corner. So far it has somehow always sorted itself out and I received my support, but I live under the constant threat of having to buy a tent and move to Gage Park. The law of probability says eventually I will end up living on the street, never mind being 100% disabled.

I worked all my life, but mostly as a teacher outside Canada. I had just signed a contract with a high school in Beijing when I fell so sick that Air Canada shipped me back to Canada. Not knowing Brampton from Adam I ended here nevertheless, because of the Brampton Civic Hospital and by the grace of Ontario Works. I was then told that I had to apply for ODSP immediately. At that time I was still half-dead and bedridden and couldn't fill out forms.

Since family and friends live a continent away, my doctor told OW that he would complete my ODSP

application but that the forms would arrive 14 days late. Ontario Works promptly suspended me. Legal Services on Queen Street were shocked, spoke to the anti-social worker at OW and I was reinstated; but not for long.

Realizing that I was in a brutal circus that would make even healthy people sick, I found support from the John Howard Society, where one counsel assists me in getting the constant paper work done and patiently deals with the ODSP worker.

In a ruckus about my application for Old Age Security, instead of phoning John Howard in a fact-finding call, or having a functioning filing system, ODSP, like a bunch of sociopaths gone wild, simply suspends sick people.

Now I have been suspended again on August 1, 2013, for not having forwarded my change of address. I did so and the John Howard Society has the copy of my fax receipt and change of address.

Could it get worse? If course, it could. I am now on monthly suspension and on "claw backs" of money I cannot even figure out for what, because they gave me an option of 10 different possible reasons for the deduction of support money and I don't fall even under any of them. Now I need a lawyer in addition to the John Howard Society's help. Since our Legal Aid system has ceased to be an "Aid" for lawyers I might get only a law student. No money, no honey!

Perhaps, I will end up making support payments to ODSP every month.

I have never experienced more terror and stress than since I depend on the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, starting in mid-2011. The treatment is simply brutal and barbaric and I would not expose a convict to such life. Yet, ODSP treats us like convicts. Perhaps it should become part of Corrections

Ontario.

That disabled people are exposed to such constant inhuman treatment, indirectly but factually euthanizing those with heart and stroke conditions, as well as cancer victims, cannot be simply talked away. No one can possibly get better under such treatment.

I wish to talk to other disabled victims, who have been suffering similar treatment and perhaps, together, we can turn our so-called rights into real ones.

Sincerely,
Henry

Re: Tar sands are coming to Peel

Thank you for alerting us with your Fall 2013 article 'Tar Sands are Coming to Peel'. All we hear and see in the media is that this would be good for Canada's economy. I don't believe this pipeline can be good for Mississauga or Peel, and I don't believe the tar sands are good for Canada. It's all about exporting Canada's natural resources with little regard for the risks to our communities, our health, and our environment.

A group of Peel volunteers participated recently in a "Bike for the Climate" event, riding the Etobicoke Creek Trail. We carried signs that said we oppose dangerous pipelines and reckless expansion of the tar sands. We want our government to Defend our Climate, and Defend our Communities.

We have to kick the fossil fuel habit and move ASAP to an energy policy that supports and promotes cleaner, greener, more sustainable forms of energy.

Rosemary Keenan, Chair
Sierra Club of Canada
Peel Region Group

ToughTimes

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Produced by:
Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG)

Editor:
Edna Toth

Associate Editor/Graphic Designer:
Ryan Gurcharn

Graphic Designer:
Dalia Emam

Contributors:
Simon Black, Bill Crawford, Lisa Davis, Dalia Emam, Todd Foster, Tom Gancarz, Eric Guerbilsky, Randy Johnson, Shaila Kibria-Carter, Esther Kingsley, Alexandra Perras, Francine Sampogna, Rachel Miele, Laurie Miller, Michel Revelin, Motillal Sarjoo, Catherine Sople, Melanie Taddeo..

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Phone: 905 826-5041
Mail address: 287 Glidden Road, #4
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How can we get \$7 a day childcare?

QUEBEC HAS IT. WHY NOT PEEL?

Childcare is a huge issue for many families in Peel. Full-day kindergarten is proving to be a help, especially if tied to before- and after- school care. But if you are a Mom who has to work, and you have children of any age, you have responsibility and then some. (Not to say that Dads don't have duties, too.)

Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) and labour unions in Peel want to get people talking about childcare – PPAG aiming at the municipal election next year, and labour looking even further ahead to the federal election which must take place not later than October 2015.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has a booklet Kitchen Table Conversation Guide. Peel Labour Council invites everyone who wants to improve childcare to hold a Kitchen Table Conversation in their own home, in an apartment building meeting room, in a church, in a nearby coffee shop, or wherever people can meet to talk about solving childcare problems.

Purpose of the chat is to

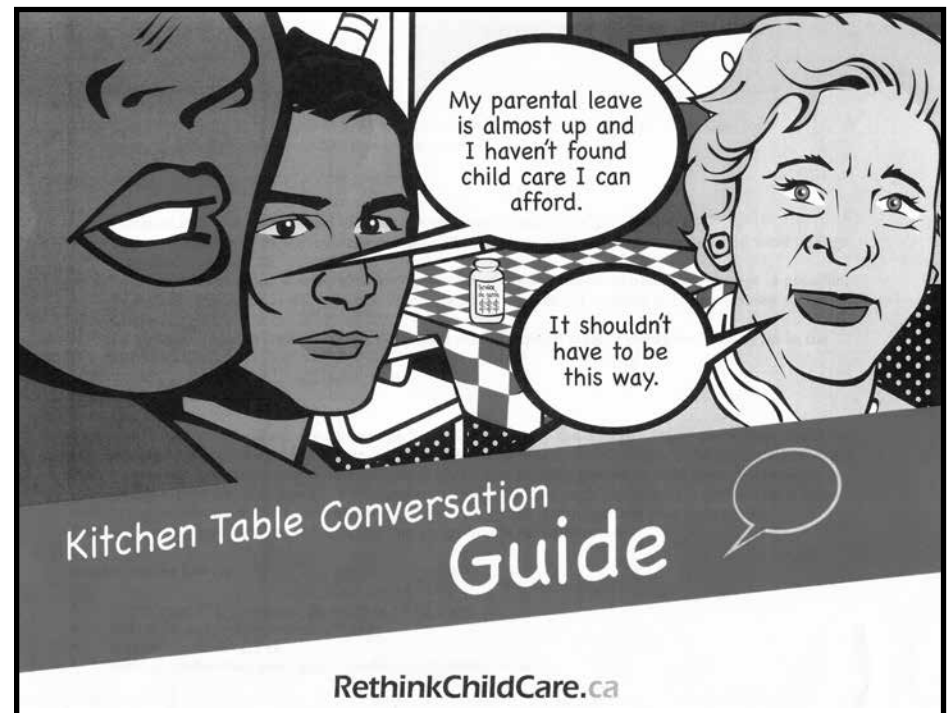
share stories and experiences of childcare, to find out what works and what doesn't, and to build a network of activists to ensure childcare is an issue in the coming elections.

Here are some facts to get you started:

Quebec's provincial government offers childcare at \$7 a day. The program more than pays for itself, says the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), quoting a study by economists at the Université de Sherbrooke. CUPE says that for every dollar Quebec spends on childcare programs, \$1.05 is returned in higher tax revenues and lower spending for the provincial government, with an additional 44-cent benefit returned to the federal government.

The study also found that after affordable childcare was introduced "the median after-tax income of single mother families in Quebec shot up by 81%. The number of single mothers on welfare declined by more than 50%."

CUPE reports that studies show "immediate economic



benefits are in addition to longer-term benefits from improved educational, health and social outcomes for children in early learning and childcare programs."

You can talk about it at a childcare Kitchen Table in your neighbourhood, or find the details online at www.rethinkchildcare.ca. Phone (416)234-8350 to find out about Kitchen Table Talks and how to get involved.

You can find out about childcare in Peel, including subsidies for fees, from Child Care Info Peel: Mississauga and Brampton: 905-890-9432, Caledon: 1-888-836-5550, TTY: 905-890-9432

Kindergarten is now available

in more schools. Does that make a difference to childcare needs?

Peel District School Board has 13,107 students enrolled in full-day kindergarten, and 7,239 students in half-day kindergarten. Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board has 6,341 children in full day, and 2,482 in non-full day. Neither school board provides full-day kindergarten in all schools, but full day will be phased in by 2015.

Lunch and after-school programs are also offered by various organizations at some schools. Check with your school. Note that every year 16,000 babies are born in Peel. The need for day care won't disappear any time soon.

Find a room or live in the woods: there's not much choice in Peel

Housing is the number one need of cash-poor people in Peel.

For some it is just finding a single room in somebody's house – find it or live in the woods, or sleep in a shelter possibly with dozens of people in the same room.

For others, the need is finding a home for a family. But Peel has the longest waiting list for social housing in all of Ontario.

All municipal councils in Peel have recently discussed the rules governing secondary units – basement apartments, granny flats, or similar.

Mississauga will license them for a fee if they meet bylaw requirements.

Brampton has held public meetings and expects to have bylaw recommendations in December, 2013.

Caledon permits secondary units

"as of right", according to a report by the Region of Peel.

Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) supports secondary units as making more homes available. PPAG also suggests that local councillors should not accept election campaign donations from corporations, including developers, as this could discourage councils from negotiating for more social/affordable housing in new developments. Councils should

also suggest that homes be built with secondary units in mind, so that "empty nesters" can more easily adapt their property; that basements should routinely be half-above-ground as safety measure.

To join in PPAG's discussions on housing, phone Shey Chhibber 416 844-8112 to be invited to PPAG's next housing meeting.

Poverty reduction or poverty promotion?

CHILDCARE DECISION AT ODDS WITH POVERTY REDUCTION ACTION PLAN

By Simon Black

It appears the members of Peel Region council are a little confused: are they committed to poverty reduction or poverty promotion? In the last issue of Tough Times, I reported that Peel Region councillors voted to close down the 12 childcare centres the Region runs within two years. Municipally (or in Peel's case—regionally) operated daycares pay Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) higher wages and provide better benefits than private non-profit and for-profit centres. Municipally-operated centres also provide the highest quality care available. And in a sector known for poverty-level wages, high turnover and overwork, there is a well-documented relationship between the quality of childcare a centre offers and the wages and working conditions of its ECEs i.e. the quality of care work. Furthermore, in an economy which undervalues work done primarily by women, these centres with their good wages and working conditions have struck a blow for gender equality.

Senior bureaucrats in Peel's Human Services supported the closures, arguing that the move would free up funds for desperately-needed childcare subsidies. Get out of the business of directly delivering childcare, the bureaucrats argued, and focus on providing subsidies. They also claimed that there was no demand and an over-supply of spaces in the system i.e. vacancies in non-profit and for-profit centres.

But wait! It turns out the Region will not be closing the centres after all. Instead it will simply pawn them off (i.e. privatize) to three community-based non-profit providers. Thus, it appears that the primary factor motivating the Region's plans was to save on labour costs; ECEs at these centres will now make substantially less than when they were employed by the Region. As the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care's Andrea Calver has said, "Wages will go down substantially. Turns out, high wages

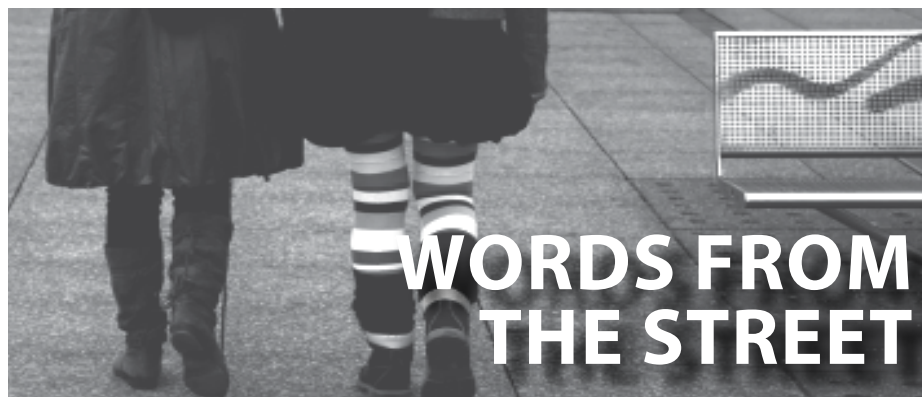
paid to ECE's is what the whole thing was about."

This brings us to the issue of poverty reduction. Last year Peel Region released its Poverty Reduction Strategy Three-Year Action Plan. The Region has expressed grave concern at the growing number of Peel residents who are experiencing poverty: "Even during times of economic growth," the Action Plan pointed out, "Peel's low-income population has continued to rise." One of the objectives of the plan is a stronger regional economy that provides adequate wages and progressive employment opportunities for Peel residents. This is to be achieved in part by "increasing awareness about the impact of unstable poorly paid (precarious) employment on Peel residents and the community."

Hmm...It would appear that the Region's childcare plans stand in direct contradiction to the goals of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. By offloading its centres to non-profit providers, the Region has undermined the wages of ECEs, making their work more, not less, precarious. And now councillors are keen to apply this perverse logic to other Region jobs; Peel's long-term care facilities are next on the chopping block. If councillors are serious about reducing poverty they would defend public sector jobs that pay a living wage and provide decent benefits. If Peel Region wants to increase awareness about the impact of poorly-paid precarious employment, perhaps it should start with its own political elites.

Simon Black is a PhD candidate at York University

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The introduction of full-day junior and senior kindergarten has resulted in some ECEs working for school boards. In Peel District School Board, ECEs and some other non-teachers working with children, are members of the Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel (ERFP), a trade union seeking affiliation to the Canadian Labour Congress. Through union negotiations, ECEs are paid between \$22.67 and \$27.34 an hour. Since kindergarten began expansion in 2010, the number of ECEs in Educational Resource has doubled to 600.*



I get \$1,000 a month as a forklift operator and I am the only woman in the plant. I don't feel safe, stress is huge, I am in an emotional state. I am afraid of being hit. What would I like to do? I enjoy working with yarn, crochet, knitting. I started a year ago, and I like the people who do it.

Woman at Knights Table

I needed a cast for an ankle injury. My EI is gone. I need something to fight the pain. Carrying boxes with an injured ankle, I keep on working.

Man at Knights Table

I have been living in Brampton in another rooming house full of drama. Getting tired of this merry-go-round of moving every few months, but I will probably have to move at the end of the month again. It's

very difficult to get reasonable housing, the wait lists are long that's for sure. I've been given an ODSP worker here in Brampton who I have no confidence in, which has made things a little tougher than they really need to be. I know people who have supportive workers who are helpful to them, but this one that I have is not one of those, oh well.

Don't say my name

A shelter costs \$69 a day, jail \$143, psychiatric bed \$665, social housing \$25 - \$31 a day.

Statement at a social services meeting

About your paper Tough Times, I am already a reader of it, and I've been telling some friends about it too. I resonate with many things in it. I will certainly read future issues.

Shila



Story & drawing by
Francine Catherine Sampogna

Moore's was giving away suits, dress jackets, shirts, belts, ties, at Grace United Church, in downtown Brampton, hosted by Regeneration. Fellowship Hall had a huge selection!

My friend said, "The last time I wore a suit was on my wedding day."

With all the selection at Grace United he could have been fitted for wedding #2 and #3 and #4. But he refused and said, "NO MORE."

He picks up some shirts and eats his desserts and declares: WRINKLE FREE FOR ME.

Peel wants more mothers to breastfeed their babies

“Breastfeeding is an essential component of child health promotion,” says a report to Peel Regional Council.

That’s another way of saying that breastfeeding is good for kids, a view supported by studies that show less tummy-trouble and ear aches among breastfed babes.

About 16,000 new babies arrive in Peel every year, and most moms plan to breastfeed their little ones. However, the 2013 Breastfeeding Surveillance System set up by Peel Health reveals that about 8,000 babies are also fed formula or other drinkables. The result can be that breast milk dries up. Within a month, only a third

of those new babies are being breastfed and not using formula.

Not good enough, says Peel Health. So staff will persuade hospitals and moms in the Region to cut back on formula feeding unless medically indicated.

Another plus for nursing moms: Peel Health links women with experience of breastfeeding to women who need advice or reassurance. To register for the service phone 905-799-7700. To volunteer to help, by all means register, but there are no spots open for the time being. Help is offered in various languages.

Peel has two breastfeeding clinics, one close to Bramalea Civic Centre, the other in Meadowvale Town Centre.



Chubby Jacob Carter, breastfed baby of Shaila Kibria-Carter, executive director of Labour Community Services of Peel. Kibria says: “Breastfeeding is less work for moms. You don’t have to sterilize bottles or buy formula, plus breast milk is always available,

always at the right temperature, and easy to carry around, along with the baby.” Kibria notes that thanks to labour unions, mothers are entitled to maternity leave – 17 weeks under federal legislation introduced in 1971. But there’s more to it than that. Women who have paid into Employment Insurance are entitled to maternity benefits only if they have accumulated 420 to 700 hours of insurable employment during the qualifying period. The number of hours of insurable employment required is determined when you apply for benefits, depending on your place of residence, and the unemployment rate in your region.

Confusing? If you get stuck, phone Shaila at 905 696-7444. Now here’s the good part: Parental leave can be shared by both parents. And Shaila says don’t feel bad if nursing your baby doesn’t work for you. It’s your choice. (Photo by Alex Carter)



PHOTO BY RACHELLE MIELE

MENTORING PROGRAM @ KNIGHTS TABLE

Christopher Plummer is six years old, and he and mom Stacey are busy painting pumpkins, with the help of Dr. Morton Mates, who is 72. All three are taking part in Seniors in Action, where a half-dozen families and a dozen seniors meet at Knights Table, a soup kitchen in Brampton, every Tuesday and Thursday, to work on crafts, and chat, and socialize, and exchange ideas about creating a happy family.

This is a first effort by Knights Table to bring in people from the neighbourhood and set up a mentoring program. Seniors volunteered to take a short course in mentoring, where they discussed problems that children can encounter, like being bullied or picked on, becoming depressed.

A second group of families and mentors is being set up, to start in the New Year. To join in, phone Rachelle Miele at 905 454-8725.

Labour unions want candidates to run

Labour unions in Peel are looking for left-wing candidates to run in elections at municipal and provincial level, culminating in efforts to oust the Tory government in federal elections expected in October, 2015.

As part of a national program organized by the Canadian Labour Congress, Peel Labour Council (formerly Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council) will provide training in election dynamics: how to decide to be a candidate, how to start out, how to gather support, and how to help others get elected.

Peel Labour Council has already held a first meeting to set up training sessions, where Labour Council president Motillal Sarjoo told Peel union leaders: “Unions are under attack in a way that we have never seen since the Great Depression.

“An influential group of business lobbyists with deep ties to

the Conservative Party are leading a coordinated and determined assault aimed at destroying the Canadian labour movement. In response to these attacks, the Canadian Labour Congress is already moving, and as a local labour movement, we must build union strength and capacity in this community.”

Jim McDowell, who presided at the October meeting, said Peel Labour Council has already made public presentations proving that a minimum wage (currently \$10.25) must be at least \$14 merely to lift workers to the poverty line. Labour is now campaigning for a “living wage” that would restore families to an income covering basic needs.

Municipalities in Peel have been asked to insist that firms that bid on municipal contracts pay a “living wage”.

Want to run for office or work in elections on Labour’s side? Phone Gogi Bhandal 416 417-5503.

Child Care Subsidy Available

Find out if you qualify

Child care subsidy is available to help eligible families pay for the cost of child care for children 0 to 12 years.

Choose the type of care you want for your child, either in a licensed child care centre or with a licensed home child care agency.

For more information or to find out if you qualify, visit www.peelregion.ca/children or call 905-793-9200.



Region of Peel
Working for you
Human Services



The Avro Arrow

The Avro Arrow has been dead for half a century. But it's still making news.

It's an aircraft that kept 15,500 workers on the go at factories in Malton for a few years. Then puff... and it was gone.

It's a story of invention and engineering, companies forming, factories building, and union negotiators ensuring the men on the shop floor got their fair share -- until

the politicians of the day shot the Arrow down.

Much has been written about the Arrow. Mississauga Library has 33 titles and a couple of DVDs about it, plus mentions in works of local history.

So what's new? The Arrow has made a comeback in the form of a lifesize metal model, unveiled recently at the Canadian Manufacturing Technology Show at the International Centre in

Malton, with dignitaries and some of those long-ago workers in attendance.

On right some trivia, though nothing was trivial about the Arrow. It created lots of jobs, inspired research right here in Peel into aeronautics and associated sciences. Morale flew as high as the aircraft itself.

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"Canadian Heritage"

Photo of the life size model of the Avro Arrow

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John Hughes stands beside the new Arrow. He worked for Avro from 1949 to 1964 on engine development and airframe and was on the union's negotiating team. He says dismissively of the management side: "You couldn't

tell them anything." He also notes that management had brought in a job evaluation plan. Then suddenly Arrow plans were grounded. "Nobody saw the cancellation coming," he recalls. He's now a director of the Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada, which made the model Arrow, and which is looking for a home for itself and for the Arrow. Meanwhile, the model Arrow is in a private hangar at Pearson International Airport.

15,500 workers out of job

By Bill Trbovich
*Communications Director,
International Association of Machinists
and Aerospace Workers Canada*

When the Arrow was cancelled on February 20, 1959, all 15,500 workers, including two full time milkmen, were represented by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) at A. V. Roe and Orenda Aerospace.

IAM members built the airframe. The bulk of the membership lost their jobs on that single day as well as 30,000 other workers associated with the program. A. V. Roe was the third largest company in Canada at the time.

About the Milkmen:

In 1959, when you needed milk, it was delivered to your door in glass bottles by a milkman, and either by

truck or horse-drawn cart and when you wanted more milk, you put your empty milk bottles on your porch with a note inside telling the milkman how many new bottles you wanted and he would collect money from you every Friday.

You didn't buy it at the grocery store.

Because AVRO was a 24-hour operation and we had more than 15,000 members working in two plants, AVRO on Airport Road and Orenda around the corner on Derry Road, if you wanted milk on the job, you wouldn't find it in a vending machine...they didn't exist, you had it delivered by a milkman, and that's what these two members of the IAM did. These two members served the population of a small city in two buildings.

Glenn Sawdon was an Avro worker long ago. A flight test technician, he recalls working in the laboratories which received information about flight tests while they were in progress – "maybe 250 different elements of the flight."

Work on the Arrow was exciting for the then 20-year-old Glenn and for many of the men working on the new technology.

Wife Sandy chuckled to friends at the Malton ceremony: "He was too busy for a honeymoon."

Half a century, and she's not forgotten yet!



TOUGH TIMES PHOTO

DON'T GO HUNGRY



If you are struggling to make ends meet, have to choose between paying rent or buying food, can't afford formula for your baby, or have more bills than income...The Mississauga Food Bank is here to help you.

Anyone in need and living in Mississauga is eligible to use a neighbourhood food bank or other food program regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or immigration status.

Visit www.themississaugafoodbank.org/getfood
or phone us at 905-270-5589 to find the food program closest to you.

Equal & accepted: Connecting for life

By Melanie Taddeo

As a child we lead a carefree life with very few worries.

We have dreams and ambitions for when we grow up, but when a life-altering experience occurs in your early twenties that alter your life so drastically those dreams and ambitions come to a complete halt.

It is at that moment that you have to make a choice to fight or give up. I chose to fight. In my fourth year of university I was vibrant young woman whose dream was to become a teacher, a wife, and a mother.

Then I suffered a massive stroke that left me paralyzed on my left side and legally blind. So instead of achieving my dreams I was fighting for my life, and trying to come to terms with being disabled.

Imagine having to learn to do everything over again. The basics, walking dressing, feeding yourself just to survive. Plus you have the preconceived notions of what your life will be like from a society that

felt I should stay home and be taken care of.

A lot has changed over the past 18 years and I have come a long way, but I have faced many barriers.

Things as simple as the staring and whispers, to being told when I graduated -- the first, legally blind teacher in Ontario -- that I would never teach.

These barriers are enough to make any person give up, but it empowered me and inspired me to help educate society about the abilities and special talents of people with disabilities, and to help those with disabilities realize their dreams.

It is not an easy road and has many bumps along the way.

But Ontario is on the right track by introducing Accessibility Standards.

I am proud of Missississauga for being quick to start implementing changes -- from customer service, to transportation. This is a work in progress, but it is a city that will be accessible for all in the coming years.

I get frustrated when I hear of situations where people with disabilities are not accommodated -- if there is no wheelchair ramp, or a bus driver gives someone a hard time about a guide dog. Or when I was handed forms to fill in even though my white cane was visible. When I responded by asking for assistance I was told they didn't do that.

What it boils down to is lack of education about accessibility and how to accommodate those with unique needs.

I hope that one day everyone will be seen as equal and accepted.

This will take a lot of hard work and commitment and is just one of the reasons I have started Connect 4 Life, a charity that helps individuals with disabilities to access education and training, to help them contribute to their communities and ultimately educate everyone on how we are all equal.

Connect 4 Life aims to provide access to education and training to individuals with disabilities that will allow them to become independent, contributing members of society. A registered charity, it will use crowd-fundraising, a gala, contacts with corporate donors, to bring in the money to pay for training.

The Region of Peel's Accessibility



Plan for 2010 notes that 171,030 people in Peel, or 14.8% of the population report having a disability.

For more information check www.connect4life.ca

Mississauga Council has an Accessibility Advisory Committee which includes representatives from the disability community and Councillors Katie Mahoney and Patricia Saito.

Brampton Council's Accessibility Advisory Committee is set to meet at 6.30 p.m. 10 December, 2013. Coun. Sandra Hames is a member, plus citizens with disabilities, caregivers and others. Caledon's Accessibility Advisory Committee meets monthly. Coun. Richard Whitehead is a member, plus people with disabilities and others.

To take part in Peel Poverty Action Group discussions on disability, phone Melanie Taddeo at (647) 454-1252.

...Continued from front page

Winning votes for cash-poor people

These are among the poverty problems in Peel:

Housing: For cash-poor people in Peel, housing is No. 1, with 13,000 people on the waiting list for social housing, and even more looking for space they can afford. More people are using shelters -- 15,217 individuals and families using emergency and transitional

shelters in 2012, up 4,000 in a few years. (See page 3)

Violence: Involving youth, against women, seniors, on the streets, on the internet.

Polarization of poverty: stigmatizing "the disabled poor", alongside "the working poor", "seniors living in poverty". (See above)

Temp agencies, where the agencies are well-paid but the people they hire are not; (See page 10)

Affordable childcare (See stories pages 3, 4, 5)

Transportation (See page 8)

Should dental care be covered by Ontario Health Insurance Plan? (See page 10)

Don't forget to take part.

Tough Times is looking for a BUSINESS MANAGER

Candidate must be an energetic self-starter who can set up the administration of a growing enterprise and prepare a business plan.

An ideal candidate will have excellent office skills, including accounts and have the ability to work on own initiative and the scope for growth.

Interested candidates are encouraged to email resume and cover letter to toughtimestabloid@gmail.com.

Hey PRESTO!

GETTING A MOVE ON

The Region of Peel and Brampton and Mississauga transit systems want to test-drive a program of cheaper transit for between 200 and 500 Ontario Works recipients.

Details are still being worked out, but Presto cards would be given at half-price to some OW folk. Presto cards are “loaded” with money, which is deducted when the card is swiped on a machine on a bus.

The cards would have the cost of a monthly bus pass (\$120 in Mississauga, \$115 in Brampton.)

The other half of the cost would be shared by the cities’ transit departments and the Region of Peel.

The pilot project, to start in 2014, will run for a year to see if it works.

Busing about Peel is an expensive business. A single bus fare for an adult is \$3.25 in Mississauga and \$3.50 in Brampton.

Weekly or monthly passes may result in cheaper trips. Lower fares vary from a mere \$1 a trip for Brampton seniors to free travel for pre-schoolers and passengers with vision loss. There’s Presto cards and GO Transit, passes for schoolage kids (the cost determined by age, not grade) and so many does and don’t that Brampton Transit is arranging public meetings to explain it all.

Here’s an idea: (see chalkboard).

Advantages might accrue from councillors using the buses: they might find out first hand the importance of frequent bus service at all hours and bus routes that go where people need to go. They could meet voters on the bus. They could see women struggling with strollers and they could think about ramps. They could help elderly ladies and gentlemen get safely to a seat. They could thank the drivers. And think of the tax cash we’d save!

City councillors have car allowances:
\$17,304 a year for Mississauga
\$12,485 a year for Brampton

If council members had bus passes instead of a car allowance, city savings would be:

Brampton (numbers rounded):
\$12,485 X 11 council members (includes the mayor) = \$137,332 in car allowances.

\$115 X 11 council members = \$1,265 X
12 months = \$15,180 in bus passes.

Savings: \$122,152

Mississauga:
\$17,304 X 11 councillors (Mayor McCallion doesn’t get a car allowance) = \$190,344 in car allowances.

\$120 X 12 council members = \$1,440 X 12
months = \$17,280 in bus passes.

Savings: \$173,064

(E&OE)

...Continued from front page

Workers slip below poverty line

OPSEU launched an advertising campaign that focused on the profits made by the March of Dimes and the fact that while workers were being offered zeros the agency’s executive director Andria Spindel saw her salary increase by 13 per cent to almost \$270,000 including benefits.

Spindel noted in the March of Dime’s annual report 2012-13: “It’s been a great year, one that produced the highest ever level of surplus.”

March of Dimes is a charity. OPSEU is using a slogan: Think about giving to the March of Dimes? Think again.

March of Dimes’ Chief Administrative Officer Chris

‘MARCH OF DIMES CEO RECEIVES SALARY & BENEFITS OF \$269,949.94’

Harrison told Tough Times that March of Dimes’ activities involving OPSEU in Oakville and CUPE in Peel are financed by the Ontario government via the Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN). He said the government has frozen the cash available, and March of Dimes is not permitted

to supplement the amounts from other funds. “Those are the rules,” he said.

According to France Gelinas, MPP, health critic for the NDP, the LHINs have received a 4% increase for “community services” which would include March of Dimes. Gelinas also reports that Ontario is to spend a year reviewing the LHINs, starting while MPPs are in the constituencies for Winter Break (12 December, 2013, to 19 February, 2014). The review will involve meetings across the province, following up on complaints by individuals about services no longer being available, and other issues.

Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG), producer of Tough Times, has asked to present to the review, citing complaints by several PPAG members about lack of home care. PPAG is also concerned that

workers providing services paid for through the LHINs could be pushed below the poverty line. OPSEU plans to talk to the Review in February.

United Way of Peel uses March of Dimes materials for a Learning Independence for Future Empowerment (LIFE) program. Peel United Way does not fundraise for the organization.

March of Dimes provides administrative services to other charities. Its annual report for 2012-13 says “The intent is to increase efficiency for those partners, reduce their expenses.”

The report also notes: “our most valuable resource – our dedicated, hardworking employees, whose broad range of contributions and talents have created a unique culture from which our success has grown.”



MPP Jagmeet Singh holds community meeting at Malton Community Centre discussing temporary job agencies.

21st century slavery

More than 100 people talked about temporary job agencies at a recent meeting in Malton Community Centre, and they were not polite.

Some said working through such agencies was “21st century slavery.”

A flyer advertising the meeting asked: Is your agency deducting a large sum of money from your paycheck? Are you afraid your temporary job will never become permanent? Are you afraid to report issues to your employer? Or are you facing poor or unsafe workplace conditions?

Jagmeet Singh, (NDP MPP for Bramalea-Gore-Malton) who

organized the meeting, declared, “These are jobs where people have no job security, no access to benefits, little to no opportunity to obtain permanent employment and often barely make minimum wages.

“We need laws that will solve the injustice that employees face due to temporary employment. We need laws that will protect the rights of vulnerable workers, guarantee employee safety, and guarantee that all workers in Ontario can earn a decent livable wage.”

Another speaker was Andrew Cash, (NDP MP for Davenport) who has a Bill in the House of Commons to “establish a National Urban Workers Strategy.”

Cash told MPs: “More and more Canadians are working as independent contractors, are self-employed or free lance or working multiple part-time jobs, and a growing number of particularly young workers are working for free as unpaid interns.”

In Malton, he declared that his Bill “calls on the federal government to work with the provinces to crack down on the abuse of workers’ rights connected to temporary job agencies and to update employment laws and policies to reflect the reality of work in the 21st century.”

Cash’s Bill is a Private Member’s Bill, so unlikely to pass. It could be debated in October 2014.

Tough Times asked Brad Butt (PC MP for Mississauga-

Streetsville) to comment: “It’s really a provincial, not a federal matter,” Butt said. “It would only affect railways, airlines, telecom companies like Bell who probably don’t use temp agencies. I sympathize with Andrew Cash, but the issue is for Ontario’s Employment Standards Act.”

MINISTRY OF LABOUR’S TOLL-FREE HOTLINE

1-800-531-5551

“We have strong protections in place, and want to hear from workers if they have any concerns.

The Ministry of Labour’s toll-free hotline(1-800-531-5551)

provides confidential advice about workers’ rights in 23 languages including Punjabi, Urdu, Tamil and many others.”

Linda Jeffrey

MPP Brampton-Springdale

CHEW ON THIS

Visit a soup kitchen or a food bank in Peel to find people with serious dental needs such as missing or rotting teeth, ill-fitting dentures.

They don’t have money to pay a dentist, and lots of other people have the same problem.

So should dental care be covered by Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan? Peel Poverty Action Group says yes, and wants voters at municipal and provincial level to support the idea.

Some people already have dental care coverage

through private plans, or work, or Employment Insurance, or Ontario Works, or Ontario Disability Support Program.

Children under 18 may get help through the Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) Program, which pays for basic dental treatments for children under 18 who need urgent dental care and whose families don’t have dental insurance.

Healthy Smiles Ontario pays for dental care for children 17 and under in a low income family that has no dental coverage.

But many others are not in these groups so don’t get their teeth

fixed.

Peel Health has chipped in with dental care for cash-poor seniors. There’s a waiting list that’s growing every day. And it’s a once-in-a-lifetime program. Get a filling today, and no more subsidized fillings, extractions, dentures, for the rest of your life. Ouch!

It’s understood that poor dental care detracts from general health. Bad teeth show up in hospitals as heart conditions or some other serious ailment.

So how much will poor dental care today cost OHIP tomorrow? Has the research been done? Someone please brush up on that.

Just for the record, a dental surgery run by volunteer dentists is open one evening a week at St. Mina and St. Kyrellos Coptic Church, 1699 Dundas Street East, Mississauga. Phone 647-234-0586, but there’s already a waiting list.

To find out about affordable dentistry, including dental clinics operated by Peel Health, phone 905-799-7700

To take part in PPAG’s dental discussion, chewing on the politics of healthy teeth, phone 905 826-5041.

PHOTO SUPPLIED BY EDEN FOOD BANK



Peter Costello, Director of Operations for the Community Learning Kitchen, is ready to stir the pot for the Eden Food Bank.

Peel Region is cooking with kitchens

TWO NEW CULINARY COMPLEXES ARE HEATING UP, READY TO SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES

Executive director Bill Crawford tells the Eden story:

Our food bank started out 25 years ago as a temporary program meant to last six months or a year or 'until things got better.'

The food bank, even as it grew over the years, was designed as a short-term response to the immediate need of hunger. Our advocacy services have helped clients take steps out of poverty by helping them resolve issues they may have other than food.

The Community Learning Kitchen, through education and skill development, will help to meet the long-term needs of our clients. They will not only be able to access quality food on their own, but they will have the knowledge and skills to prepare healthy and nutritious meals for themselves and their children. What they learn in the cooking workshops and nutrition courses will continue to be of benefit to them long past their need of the food bank.

Planned programs will provide cooking classes for our clients on how to

cook food from the food bank or available in grocery stores on a low income, training courses to give the skills and experience in a commercial kitchen needed to help unemployed individuals find work in the food industry, large recipe meal production for distribution first to our clients and then to the community, and sharing our kitchen with outside community groups who would like to include cooking classes or nutrition workshops for their clients but lack their own facility.

In addition, the Community Learning Kitchen will host outreach/awareness opportunities where groups from the community can spend a part of a day in the kitchen learning basic kitchen prep skills, prepare a meal and portion it into family-sized packets for distribution to clients. Social Enterprise Projects will put the kitchen to work providing food for corporate functions or community events, earning money for the food bank.

How did Eden get the start-up money?

It raised some of it and got grants for the rest: Ontario Trillium Foundation put up \$225,000 over three years for programs in partnership with EcoSource; the Community Foundation of Mississauga provided \$60,000 over two years for capital and programs, plus \$44,625 from Peel Region's Homeless Partnering Strategy; United Way of Peel invested \$50,000.

Corporate donors were generous -- \$10,626 from ADM Milling; \$8,000 from Racon

Engineering; \$3,390 from Hite Engineering; \$2,203 from Building Workshop; and \$1,000 from Bio-K.

Local contributors included: Streetsville Rotary, \$4,000; Meadowvale Lions, \$1,000; Solel Congregation, \$500.

What does Tom Gancarz say?

Tom Gancarz is supervisor of the Good Food Brampton kitchen, and he has this to say:

Our mission is to grow access to good food through working with our community in all its diversity to increase knowledge of food and nutrition, develop skills in food preparation and empower participation in building a sustainable food system.

Good Food Brampton Community Kitchen is rolling out a series of projects aimed at increasing low-income and homeless community members' access to healthy food with instruction on proper nutrition, cooking methods, gardening and more. Our goal is to help low-income members of the community, such as Ontario Works recipients, abused women and children, adult survivors of historical abuse, at-risk youth, seniors, young and expectant mothers.

Funding came from organizations such as the Region of Peel, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ministry of Community and Social Service and Peel Children's Aid Society helped pay for the cost of constructing the kitchen, while United Way of Peel Region, two banks and other donors have offered support to the programs.

“Eden Community Food Bank in Meadowvale has invested \$180,000 in a new kitchen. It expects to get its money back.”

“Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin has opened Good Food Brampton Community Kitchen, with \$270,000 from various sources, and it, too, plans to get its money's worth.”



Thank you!

**Your input will help increase housing affordability
and eliminate homelessness in Peel**

We asked the community to join us in taking ownership of a long-term plan for housing and homelessness in Peel, and hundreds responded. People from all backgrounds shared opinions, suggestions and insights, and inspired the development of a draft local plan that addresses our community's needs.

The plan aims to improve the availability of safe, affordable, accessible, and appropriate housing in Peel, and provide a solid foundation on which to secure employment, raise families and build strong communities. Peel's Final Housing and Homelessness Plan will take effect in January 2014.

Curious about what others had to say? Want to read the draft plan?
Visit www.peelregion.ca/housinghomelessness



PEEL'S COMMUNITY OWNED
Housing and Homelessness
PLAN

1 in 7 people in Peel live in poverty.

This is unacceptable.

United Way of Peel Region works with local partners to improve the lives of people struggling in Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga by providing immediate and lasting solutions that tackle poverty on many fronts.

Learn more at www.unitedwaypeel.org.



United Way
Peel Region



Hepatitis C

Treatment, Care & Support Is Available

You can be at risk if:

- Sharing of personal care and hygiene items such as razors, toothbrushes, clippers and scissors with someone living with hepatitis C
- Sharing needles used for body tattoos and piercings. Re-using and sharing tattoo ink and ink pots
- Sharing drug equipment such as needles, filters, tourniquets, water, syringes, cookers, alcohol swabs, acidifiers
- Receive blood and body organs that have not been screened for hepatitis C. Even in Canada, if you received blood and organ donations before 1990 you may be at risk.
- Involved in medical procedures including immunization in hepatitis C endemic countries



Contact:

Bloom Clinic

40 Finchgate Blvd. Suite 224

Brampton, ON L6T 3J1

Phone: 905-451-6959 | mail@bramaleachc.ca

*Call today for information or
to book a free test.*



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